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CONTRIBUTORS

Rev. Mahlon M. Hess is a Mennonite missionary in Tanganyika.

Mrs. Gordon Larson is a missionary of The Christian and Missionary Alliance in interior New Guinea.

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

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Business Manager ..... Mark H. Taylor
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CONFLICTS AND CONTRADICTIONS IN AFRICAN CHRISTIANITY

William D. Reyburn

During the progress of this mission meeting[1] numerous aspects of the problems involved in the proclamation of the Gospel in Africa have been discussed. We have now reached that part of the docket entitled "The Gospel and Society." Before continuing discussions, I should like to speak to you concerning what I believe to be the heart of the main problem that has been touched on here. The fundamental and most basic question has so far been avoided. This matter must be dealt with if we are going to think clearly upon the questions which have been raised and which will be spoken of later. We must face the question of the roots of Christianity in this society, for if we are attempting to bolster structures whose foundations have never been laid, we labor in vain.

Yesterday I spoke of what I believe to be a basic failing in the plans for advanced theological education. It is the desire of the Board to subsidize high-level theological education in order that the Cameroun church will have the leadership which this rapidly evolving society will need. The African pastors present have unanimously favored a higher intellectual training, but they are demanding a solid Presbyterian doctrine, with no desire to bring in anything which is not of the Calvinistic doctrine and Westminster Confession. In other words, they fear a seminary which is open to argumentation from other than Presbyterian doctrinal lines. I have heard this interpreted by a number of missionaries in a variety of ways. I shall attempt to state briefly what I believe is behind the African thinking.

The Conflicts in African Thinking

It is true that a few have already been thoroughly instructed in a solid Calvinistic position, and this for them is extremely important. It is important for any Presbyterian. However, consider the sociological fact

that Africa is in search of a unity of thought and action. Africans everywhere are being asked by modern industrial and colonizing societies to pass from nonliterate, primitive economies and ideologies directly to modernization and technological ideas. This has not been the normal course of history. On the contrary, the history of the development of modern societies is radically and fundamentally opposed to such rapid and rootless transitions. Our own European society proceeded through the long and tedious evolution from peasantry in a feudal world to the rise and fall of independent states and then to the gradual unity of national states accompanied by a slowly developing system of political ideologies and economic power blocks.

We may question whether such an evolution is necessary for nonliterate forest societies which have shown such a vast capacity to import and adopt Western ideas and materials. Since this appropriation of Eastern culture has been accomplished so quickly and so easily, one is prone to ask if it has been personally and individually appropriated. Or is the real power of acceptance and innovation not contained in an all-embracing orientation which may be the real motivating force and power. This merely displays itself in a temporal mass adaptation to outward circumstances, in this case Western ideas and material culture.

Africans have been set upon by conflicting ideologies as colonization has developed. The increase of these answers to man's problems have come in the form of imperialism, colonialism, Communism, Christianity, both Roman and Protestant, technology, foreign educational systems, new political structures, new desires and opportunities for giving the individual a meaningful role in a strained and breaking society. These oppositions and contradictions cannot be adjusted indefinitely by even the most impressionable and adjustable personality. There is a limit to the opposition of categories with which a human mind can contend.

The Roots of Western Ideology

Now it is quite easy for you and me to sit in a classroom and disagree theologically, politically, socially, and in many other ways. The reason we can do so is that we are fairly sure and secure in our ideological base. Any change of opinion we can be fairly sure will not be an upsetting of our entire tradition. Also, we must as Europeans and Americans think back and remember that the right to "agree to disagree" was purchased for us in wars and struggles across Europe in which numerous men and women were sacrificed for their ideas. To agree to disagree and to remain friends (Christianity requires nothing less than love) is one of the greatest accomplishments of our history and the one which when lost leads always to the rise of a totalitarian system. The two best cases in our day are hierarchical Catholicism and Communism. The roots of the antitotalitarian attitude rest in the social realization of our Christian faith. The only alternative to the denial of the Christian faith expressed in social democracy is toward some form of totalitarianism.

Unfortunately, it was not the reformers of our faith who grasped this idea (John Calvin had a theologian who disagreed with him on the matter of baptism put to death). It was rather the human cry for justice which we know best in the French Revolution. However, we must remember that Roger Williams, in the Constitution of the State of Rhode Island, preceded and aided the ideological impulses of the French Revolution when he as a Protestant declared that all men were free to worship God as they wished. This came as a matter of fact in America after thousands of Europeans had died in the conflict in which such a revolutionary idea was seeking for a root. This idea was not born of Catholicism, nor is it supported by any totalitarian system. Hence I ask you if it is then a small matter to you that our African pastors fail to find in their lives and in their system of values any root for such an orientation to theological discussions.

Development of African Leadership

It is with genuine honesty and good-hearted Christian concern that the Board should wish to finance a high-level academic seminary. However, the idea must be carefully thought through. I ask our African pastors which it would be better to have, a core of Ph.D.'s and D.D.'s with the present mass constituency of the Cameroun Presbyterian Synods or to have a lower level of academic pastors and a more enlightened and rooted congregation? This they must decide. The money required to produce a dozen Ph.D.'s in these synods could prepare a hundred well-trained leaders if the Cameroun synods are ready to admit that they can have no transformation of their society and social problems unless Christianity finds its roots in the life of this human environment. By this I mean that the perplexing problems of lack of confidence and mutual trust, dependability, human responsibility, a tolerable ordering of human justice cannot be achieved in the Cameroun churches unless the people in those churches bring themselves and their alleged Christian faith to grips with their menacing problems contained in their attitudes and values.

Much of the problem, I admit, is contained in the weaknesses created in the social and economic crises brought on by the attempt to become Europeans. However, it has not become evident that the two sets of values are in contradiction. The movement for independence reflects and should reflect the fact that there is a basic inequality between those opposing and unadjustable ideologies. Nationalism is not a solution to the African problem. It is merely an awareness of a problem. Nationalism does not even define the problem. From nationalism to independence is a fairly sure move at this time. However, the crux of the problem lies beyond independence. This applies to the churches as well as to the territory. When an African pastor, the moderator of a synod, stands in this meeting and says his synod has not paid him for nine months, I am forced to ask myself if the Christians in that synod have taken Christianity

seriously or if they have merely adopted the form. The point to be taken seriously here is that allegiance to Christ, responsibility to God, personal relation to man's eternal destiny involves the deepest revolution in the ideological history of mankind. If this Christian conversion of the self remains an idea without confronting a human reality, it finds no raison d'etre, no living human witness to its truth, and it becomes another contradiction which must be discarded with the rest.

The Roots of Christianity in African Society

The Gospel is a living testimony which must seek its roots in the lives of those who profess it, in their living, in their social structure, in their ideals and hopes. The roots of Christianity cannot go down far in any society without confronting in a truly startling fashion human traditions. If Christianity finds its roots, it does so because it challenges and questions every aspect of the soil in which it seeks its rooting. This in no way implies that Christianity is merely a sociological institution, but it does imply very strongly that a Christian lives and witnesses to his conversion in terms of a society and cultural form. This is the medium of his communication. This is the area of his Christian responsibility. He does not perform the task of the Holy Spirit. He witnesses through his living conversion to the power of the Spirit of God in Christian words and deeds.

One cannot live and communicate Christian conversion without becoming sharply aware of a contradiction between being eternally related to God and temporarily related to man. Also, the Protestant conception of the Christian faith faces man with a personal responsibility to God. When a man assumes individually his responsibility to face his guilt (confess his sin) before God, and when two men have undergone this reorientation toward the individuality of sin and accompanying responsibility for personal decision and action, responsibility to one's fellow men must follow. It is possible for a

half-Christian to conceive of a God-directed individuality that escapes the accompanying responsibility to man. However, this is a development in the loss of Christianity. Where love is there is responsibility. True conversion means a concern for one's fellow men. This is the beginning place for the roots of Christianity. The destruction of a society and the loss of a living force caused by responsible Christianity is an illusion. True love and concern cannot destroy meaning for a society. It must, however, come to grips within its own societal setting and bring about a truly Christian (this always means love and concern) orientation to societal forms and ideals. An individual who claims to have experienced God's love in Christian conversion and who does not require therefore the accompanying conversion of his ideology is the most superficial kind of Christian. The roots of personal conversion grow from the totality of conversion.

The Transformation of Society

This does not mean that there is an evolution of conversion from a Christian in a primitive society to one in modern society. The lamentable decline of Christianity in America is adequate proof of this. The weakening of Christianity as a living force always carries along numerous "Christians" by its sheer inertia. Too often these people live upon the dying echoes of a Christianized tradition. The rise of Christianity is always faced by an equally dangerous problem in which church institutions replace or usurp domains of authority and control that were never intended for them in the New Testament idea. Hence, many men in these situations find justification for their conversion in the fact that it is a thing which great numbers in their society are doing or have done. The sociological imperative overrides the divine imperative, and faith is maintained in the expression of societal need. Since the roots of Christianity are set down by individuals dealing with themselves before God, there is only a societal foundation for Christianity when some individuals have done

this and witnessed in love to this complete conversion. The transformation of society can follow only in the wake of a truly transformed individual.

We ask ourselves why a Christian church is beset with such contradictions and problems as the Cameroun churches are. We must remember that God revealed his love in Christ without consideration for a particular form of society or system of cultural values. God confronts men in Jesus Christ where they are in their most human reality. Whether the society is monogamous or polygynous is a cultural fact and is not a determinant of God's love toward man. The Christian faith believes that God in his absolute will has reserved in every human individual a possibility (the image of God) for faith. This potential of faith cannot be touched by history or culture. It is God's possession which he has kept unto himself and through which he brings man unto himself. This relation with God is the dimension of humanity which cannot be known by science, but only by faith itself.

The anthropologist who sees this is the one whose anthropology has been converted along with his person. When this dimension of faith is opened up and realized in man it results in the comprehension of what is the most basic and real aspect of his existence. Faith in this religious sense may be directed in numerous ways, even back into society itself. However, it is only the Christian faith which recognizes the source and the motivation of God's love to bring about conversion. The mass acceptance of Christianity in Africa and in certain other parts of the world has too often been little more than an importation of a conqueror's religious form. Western Christians with honest enthusiasm have paid evangelists, built church buildings, and underwritten schools to keep up the rush of people into the church. Now that these churches are asked to move under their own power, they show that they are largely incapable of independent action.

The Church's Western Orientation

In the rapid rise of churches and mass conversions in which these people have been readjusting to an innovation orientation, they have not been given an opportunity, nor have they needed, to come to grips with their own human reality. As long as Christianity in the Cameroun was another imported item from Europe and America it was treated like many other exterior and superficial accretions. African societies undergoing vast undermining of their social structure by Westernization found the church a genuine social replacement, and its value for them has been largely a filler for holes knocked out of a former way of life. The church often serves, therefore, as a kind of cultural buffer to the sociological shock of Westernization. The church is often an institution whose line of communication runs between the African and the new Western forms of life. Hence the church seeks its roots in a foreign ideology and in so doing fails entirely to see the relation of Christianity to its own cultural base. Since Westernization has only the thinnest kind of veneer established in African societies, it is impossible to hope that African Christianity can become rooted and meaningful as long as it looks to Western cultural forms for its meaning.

The present climaxing rise of nationalism and independence does not at all guarantee that the Cameroun churches will become independent and strong churches. What it does mean is that the church must move to the level of its own sociological reality. When it can see (as individuals) that what it has preached for so long can and must be applied in living witness to African values and social structures it will find the frontier along which it must battle for its true existence. This church might easily become unrecognizable in a few years. It may even split into numerous factions under old tribal affiliations. While this would be a shocking spectacle as the result of fifty years of missionary labors, it must be said that the church of the Cameroun cannot begin to set down its Christian roots until it plants

them in its own human soil. It may take many years before these roots can produce the fruits of a vital Christianity. However, without such a foundation there is little hope for an African church, a transformation of African society, and a living witness of Christianity in Africa.

Footnote

1. This article is based upon an address to the annual mission meeting of the West Africa Mission of the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. in August, 1956.

AFRICAN POLITICAL SYSTEMS AND AFRICAN CHURCH POLITY

Mahlon M. Hess

A missionary to India was recently describing the experience of his mission in organizing the young national church in their district. The congregations were divided into districts under district councils, district councils sent representatives to regional councils, and regional councils chose representatives which constituted a national council. It was a comparatively simple democratic arrangement, but they are not finding it to work too well at the present time. The people of that area have a temperament of dependence and subservience, are accustomed to the servant-master relationship, and in the judgment of this missionary would perhaps respond better to some system which provides strong central leadership.

In another area of India, some Indian nationals were conversing with their missionary leaders and expressed deep appreciation for the fact that the missionaries had brought the Gospel to them. Then they asked that the missionaries not require them to adopt in their churches a Western type of worship and organization, and appealed for liberty to follow a pattern of church life adapted to their own Eastern way of life.

The author has had one term of service on a mission field in East Africa where there is a growing national church that is just at the point where it needs a more definite organizational form for the sake of its own development. The first pastors were only recently ordained, after the churches had prayed through to a unanimous discernment as to the men of God's choice. This experience has been a great factor in making the national Christians realize that they are a church under God, and not entirely dependent upon the foreign missionaries who brought them the Gospel. Experiences along the way have indicated that the organizational patterns of our Western churches are not entirely relevant

to East Africa. We now face the problem of the degree to which we shall transplant some American polity, or if not, how to discover what type of polity will be relevant to the life and needs of our brethren in East Africa.

The writer is keenly aware of the warning sounded by Radcliffe-Brown that "we cannot hope to pass directly from empirical observations to a knowledge of general sociological laws or principles;" that, as Bacon warned, this would lead "only to a false appearance of knowledge." However, having the benefit of surveys of representative African tribes made by recognized anthropologists, as well as having access to comparative studies made by scholars and the conclusions drawn therefrom, the author feels encouraged to believe that the ideas hereafter set forth have some validity.

Systems in the Whole of Life

While Westerners tend to compartmentalize their lives, to the Oriental and to primitives life is a unified whole. Providing the material necessities of life, social relations with one's own group and with those outside the group, perpetuating the family and the culture, and relations with the supernatural are regarded as being, as indeed they are, intertwined and interdependent.

Every society has "mechanisms for the regulation of affairs that concern the group as a whole."[1] We commonly term these mechanisms political systems, and they serve to regulate both behavior within the group and relations with outside groups. The purpose of such political institutions is to make possible the harmonious functioning of the society and the perpetuation of the group and its culture.

In order to assure the perpetuity of the group, the whole of life is therefore regulated: marriage, family and community relationships, economic activities, reli-

gious activities, etc. This close regulation of the whole of life is also related to the communal viewpoint of primitive societies and Eastern peoples. They have a keen sense that a man does not live unto himself, and that what each individual man does involves his whole clan; in fact, not only those who are living, but also his deceased ancestors.

In a society which regards life as a unified whole, the social system regulates the whole of life and may even combine the totality of leadership functions in a single official.

> In Africa it is often hardly possible to separate, even in thought, political office from ritual or religious office. Thus in some societies it may be said that the king is the executive head, the legislator, the supreme judge, the commander-in-chief of the army, the chief priest or supreme ritual head, and even perhaps the principal capitalist of the whole community. But it is erroneous to think of him as combining in himself a number of separate and distinct offices. There is a single office, that of king, and its various duties and activities, and its rights, prerogatives, and privileges make up a single unified whole.[2]

Life Oriented from a Religious Standpoint

In most of the non-Christian societies, not only is life regarded as a unitary whole, but it is oriented from a religious standpoint.

Not only can it be said, as Ruth Benedict comments, that "a much greater area of life is commonly handled by religious means among primitives than among any civilized peoples,"[3] but one also notes that religion is intimately related to the most ordinary duties and is in some respects almost an unconscious habit of life.

The powers that rule the universe are known, and the

> ways in which they are approached are part of the routine of living. To make a token offering of food to gods or ancestors before eating, to murmur a formula before the arrow leaves the bow, or to strengthen the power of a charm by sprinkling it with palm-wine, takes no more thought, and occurs as frequently as our conventional "Excuse me" or "Thank you."[4]

Just as life as a whole is religiously oriented, so the political systems are frequently regarded as of religious origin and having mystical authority. "An African ruler's...credentials are mystical and are derived from antiquity."[5]

In his chapter on political systems, Herskovits calls attention to the wide range of political forms found throughout the world; later he calls attention to the fact that such range is likewise found in Africa, but that Africa has more of the complex type of governmental forms than are to be found elsewhere.[6,7]

One observes that among some of the African peoples, basic authority is vested in the local unit of society; elsewhere in a larger regional unit; elsewhere in the tribal or territorial unit. This classification is somewhat arbitrary, for there are so many variations and interrelations that clear-cut classification is not possible. However, each system has a major focus which can be classified in one of these categories, so we will use them to facilitate discussion. Where the local unit is basic, the political organization tends to be nonformal; however, there are recognized and authoritative patterns to be followed. The regional and territorial types of government are in some cases highly centralized. Below are examples of the three forms.

Local Government

Pygmy government, as described by Patrick Putnam, is entirely in local hands.

> There are no chiefs, councils, or any other formal governing bodies in a pygmy camp. In making any decisions concerning the whole camp, two factors are involved. The first of these is respect for older people... Secondly, while the opinions of most of the old men are respected, every man in the camp is entitled to state his own views on any subject. Thus during the evening talking time the pygmies will discuss whether to move camp, where to move it, and why; or whether to go net hunting, and where to hunt. The discussion has no leader and may go on for several evenings. Finally the men who are shouting out different opinions will come to an agreement and the decision will be acted upon.
>
> In general it is the older and more experienced men who make the decision, but as some of the old men are considered eccentrics and freaks, little attention is paid to them. Rather, it is an oligarchy of the more respected among the old men, a body with no formal membership or specific composition. In their decisions the pungent remarks of the women also have a considerable influence.[8]

One notes that peoples who are primarily governed locally, such as the above, also have certain ties to the larger groupings of their society and to the tribe as a whole, ties which may derive from kinship, age-set groupings, religion, or common needs such as defense. Nuer society has an interesting system of segmentation which provides that in every intratribal conflict the defending group will always be as large as the aggressive group; against an external foe the whole tribe will unite. Apart from these extraordinary circumstances, their life is regulated on a local basis.

Regional Government

On the basis of the data available, this type is the most difficult to identify. It would appear that those tribes in which the clan is the significant polit-

ical unit tend to have a parallel series of independent regional units. Wagner describes the Bantu of Kavirondo as follows:

> As regards submission to political leadership, the largest groups, both among the Logoli and the Vugusu, are the exogamous, patrilineal clans, or clan groupings consisting of one larger and several smaller clans, but not the whole tribal society. The tribal unit is marked by the belief in the descent of all clans from one remote tribal ancestor, Murogoli and Muvugusu, respectively, and by the occupation of a continuous stretch of territory. In addition, there are numerous institutionalized forms of cooperation and interdependencies between the different clans of the tribal group which distinguish interclan relations from intertribal relations, but there is no tribal authority which overrules clan authority, either in its dealings with foreign tribes or in the management of its internal affairs. In terms of the definition given above, the clan would thus have to be regarded as the only political unit.[9]

Hailey describes the Musoma District of Tanganyika as an area "where...the clan unit is still the most significant feature in the indigenous structure." Their political structure consists of subsidiary councils of subclan heads (Igiha) which form a clan council (Kizaku) and each clan council sends representatives to a tribal council.[10]

Territorial Government

Oberg describes how in Uganda the pastoralist Bahima intruded into the country and overcame the agriculturist Bairu, and how they then established themselves as the rulers of the country, setting up a centralized government.

> So far we have stressed the forces which brought the ethnically different Bahima and Bairu together and the resulting social stratification with its formalization into strictly defined political relationships. The king, or Mugabe, we observed, formed the centre of this system of relationships. The exercise of power demanded still further developments. A system of government grew up around the king's person, consisting of office holders, the military bands, and the host of servants and specialists to uphold the king's dignity and authority and to carry out his orders as the leader of the politically organized Bahima ruling caste.[11]

Localization of Authority and Democracy

Though the Ashanti[12] have a highly developed centralized government, in many matters the local units are autonomous. The Ngwato likewise have a hierarchy, but local matters are handled locally among them.

> In certain respects each section, district, community, village, ward, and family-group is independent of the rest, managing its own affairs under the direction of a recognized head whose authority extends over almost every sphere of public life.[13]

It appears also to be a common tendency for African tribal units to split into two groups rather than become too large. This is significant, for local government seems to be most effective only when the group is not too large.

The democratic nature of African society functions in two particular ways. In some cases every person is allowed to participate directly in discussions, and we noted in the instance of the Pygmies that the counsel of the women is also regarded. The centralized types of government frequently make provision for the principle of representation.

Centralized Government

One notices at least two factors that gave rise to the development of centralized forms of government. Perhaps the most frequent is that of conquest. When a tribe brings under its dominion peoples of other cultures and economic pursuits, some form of centralized government is almost invariably developed. However, in the case of a tribe of homogeneous peoples, the very size of the tribe may call for some form of centralized control.

In centralized governments the checks and balances are provided by giving every group representation. The conflicts of interests thus serve to balance each other. There is the balance between the central administration and the people's interests, the balance between the central and regional interests, and the balance between authority and responsibility.[14]

In the noncentralized governments the equilibrium grows out of the conflict between local interests, which tend to segment the tribe, and lineage and ritual interests, which tend to consolidate it.

Conservatism of Political Systems

African societies tend to be small and homogeneous, living largely in isolation from other groups and having accurate knowledge of only the recent past. Their chief sources of knowledge are observation and absorption of tradition. In such a society, therefore, the older people are those who have the greatest understanding of life in terms of the tribal culture. They are, as a result, most influential in guiding the life of the group.

There is also in African temperament what one writer calls a slavish conservatism, a dull acceptance of what is with no effort to change the situation. As an illustration of this, I have observed that when a branch falls across a native path, rather than trouble to move

it out of the way, every person walks around it, and the path develops one more crook in it.

While African societies tend to be conservative, they are not static. Crisis experiences such as famine, pestilence, etc., may cause cultural and political modifications in a society, as will also the influence of surrounding groups. Regarding the Sukuma tribe of Tanganyika, East Africa, Hailey writes that the old men's societies may modify custom. He also calls attention to the fact that the young men's societies have on occasion been able to check the arbitrary powers of chiefs. Here then are two channels which the social structure itself provides as instruments of cultural change.[15]

Qualifications for Leadership

Schapera, in describing the Ngwato of Bechuanaland, indicates that a headman is the leader in each local district, and that this position is hereditary.

> ...During his absence, or after his death, the man next to him in line of succession, normally his eldest son by his first wife, automatically takes his place.
>
> This hereditary principle runs right through the Ngwato political system. It means in effect that the administration of any group is vested not so much in one particular person as in the whole family of which he is the head; and that the leading member of this family present on any occasion when action must be taken is able, by virtue of his birthright, to exercise authority over the other people of the group.[16]

Among some of the Bantu peoples, also, authority is based on descent.[17] One notes numerous other instances in which a given office is hereditary within a family group as a whole; in such cases choice between the possible candidates is made by a group of elders represent-

ing the people. Regarding the Ashanti, Herskovits writes that the Paramount Chief, "like all other officers, was selected by the elders from possible candidates in the matrilineal line."[18]

In some of the simple societies, ability is the only qualification for office.

> Among the Bushmen, some of the larger bands have a chief, but in most of them the "common affairs," such as migration and hunting, are under the direction of men whose skill alone earns them the respect and obedience of their fellows...This "official" is thus a leader with authority only as he demonstrates his ability to use it.[19]

Guntner, in discussing the Bantu of Kavirondo, points out a number of factors by which individual persons could attain prominence and become recognized as leaders: primogeniture, wealth, qualities of personality, reputation as a warrior, possession of magico-religious virtues, and age. By way of summary he says: "The more qualities of leadership came together in one person, the higher was his authority and the wider the group that recognized it."[20]

Political Systems and Economic Level

Many societies of the world produce more material goods than are required to maintain their existence. This economic surplus makes it possible to release, to a varying degree, certain persons from subsistence activities to specialize in such activities as will further the interests of the group as a whole. These specialists are usually of two types: those who direct the affairs of the tribe in an administrative capacity, and those who serve the tribe in a religious capacity. Where there is no economic surplus, there can be no specialists. The Bushmen, who have no economic surplus, and the Hottentots, who have, are excellent examples, living as they do contiguously and in similar situations.

Because their religious and political life is always geared to their economic level, it appears that nonliterate peoples are generally able to support their religious institutions. It may not be easy for them to do so, but these obligations always take precedence over personal comfort and needs. These societies also have mechanisms for sharing between those who have and those who have not. For example, in a time of food shortage a man may ask and receive help from his relatives who yet have a supply. When there are not sufficient resources in a family to provide the bride-price for a young man whose marriage has been long delayed, help may again be solicited and expected from relatives.

Headman and Council of Elders

Two of the most common political institutions of Africa are those of headman and a council of elders. Each of these is found in the local unit of society; both may be found in the same society. Their exact form and functioning varies from tribe to tribe. The functions of the council of elders is well described by Wagner. Note, too, that the elders of all subclans formed a clan council.

> When disputes or quarrels could not be settled by self-help, the person who believed himself wronged appealed to the old men of his subclan, and the accused person, if he belonged to the same subclan, was called by them, or he came on his own account, to defend his case. The old men then listened to the case as presented by the two disputants and any witness. The decision could be announced by any of the elders present as, with the facts ascertained, there was only one possible judgment which was common knowledge to all.[21]

Conclusion

The nature and characteristics of African political systems as outlined above reveal to us something of what

Africans value and of their life and thought patterns. They also reveal to us what are to them familiar patterns for the control of individual and group life. For these reasons the structure of African political systems provides us some guidance as to what might be a church polity relevant to African cultures. Elements that are universally true must be universally recognized in African church polity; factors that are of local incidence are relevant for that particular area. In skeleton fashion we will list below some of the directions in which the above study seems to lead us.

1. Since African life is a unified whole, we must make Christianity relevant to the whole of life. Just as political systems provide leadership for the whole of life, so should the total church organization provide leadership in integrating Christianity to the whole of life. This wholeness of indigenous life also points up the need to bring the Gospel to bear on the group as a whole, and to avoid detaching individual converts from their tribal and family group.

2. Since non-Christian Africans orient their lives from a religious standpoint, it will seem natural to believers that one's relationship to God must be central in life and that the rest of life must conform to the demands of that relationship, unless we spoil them by our Western secularized type of Christianity. Religious sanctions can often be used as a factor of church discipline rather than external force as such.

3. Because African political systems place basic authority in either the local unit of society, or the regional unit, or the territorial unit, the form of church polity followed in a given place should follow the political pattern of the given tribe. Where the indigenous government is basically local, a congregational form of church life will be more familiar and appreciated; where the nationals are used to regional government, they will prefer a presbyterian type of polity; where they have a king, some episcopal form will probably serve best.

4. Just as African political systems tend to keep authority in local hands and allow for a large degree of democracy, so also in church life the churches should be given as much local autonomy as possible.

5. In the same way that African cultures have some institutional patterns by which to work together as an entire tribal group, varying according to the type of political structure, so should the Christian church in Africa have channels for mutual consultation and cooperation. While this suggestion as given relates first of all to churches of a common origin and polity, it should also apply to relations between the families of churches.

6. African political systems provide checks and balances between the various interests within the group by giving each group some representation in the governmental functions and by maintaining a balance between position and responsibility; both these means may be used by the church as factors to hinder the development of authoritarian control, but they will be effective only to the degree that the spiritual life of the church is maintained.

7. As African political systems tend to be conservative, the church will want to stand for what is stable and trustworthy; just as the governmental scheme allows for growth and development, so likewise the church must be alert to the changing demands of a growing society.

8. Just as African systems of government frequently provide that those of demonstrated ability become leaders, so should the church find ways to discover and utilize such. Spiritual qualifications must be paramount, coupled with the type of personality insisted upon by Bantus, i.e., "men who talk gently and wisely and who can make the people listen and return to reason when they want to quarrel or fight."[22]

9. Just as Africans keep their cultural institutions on a level that the indigenous economic system can sup-

port, so must the church be geared to the economic level of the people. However, the church has in her hands the tools to improve the economic situation. She must teach principles of stewardship, industry, and thrift, and the older churches must share their know-how techniques.

10. The responsibilities of the African headman are very like the responsibilities of a Christian pastor, which suggests that the pastoral office will be familiar to and appreciated by African Christians. It will seem natural to them to look to him to be their leader in spiritual matters and in all phases of life, as their disciplinarian and protector, and as the one who ministers to the newborn, the sick, and the dying. In other areas some of these responsibilities are carried by a council of elders. Just as some African societies use both of these institutions, the Christian church will likely find both of them useful in most situations.

This study is obviously incomplete, for there are other factors which should be included, particularly something of the communal nature of African life and its religious backgrounds. Some of the inductions are likely naive and immature, but if they stimulate thought and investigation they will have been of value. In brief, from a survey of the literature regarding African societies and political systems, we have attempted to discover their basic factors and characteristics, and have attempted to evaluate their significance for African church polity.

Footnotes

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4. Herskovits, Melville J.: Man and His Works: The Science of Cultural Anthropology. Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1949. p. 362.
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6. Herskovits, p. 327.
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13. Fortes and Evans-Pritchard, p. 63.
14. Ibid., pp. 11-13.
15. Hailey, p. 225.
16. Fortes and Evans-Pritchard, p. 60.
17. Ibid., p. 83.
18. Herskovits, p. 334.
19. Ibid., p. 338.
20. Fortes and Evans-Pritchard, p. 235.
21. Ibid., pp. 220-221.
22. Ibid., p. 232.

The Transformation of God and the Conversion of Man

The major obstacle to the effective communication of the Christian message of God's redeeming love looms up in the receiver's notion of God. The universal question which should be posited by Christian missions is: Can a man be converted to Christianity without the transformation of his idea of God to conform to a Christian concept of God?

In order to throw some light on this question a discussion of these matters will be given within the framework of two disparate folk cultures, the peasant Quechua Indians of the Ecuadorean Andes and the hunting Kaka tribe of the southeastern French Cameroun. These two societies provide a widely divergent cultural base from which to view this problem.

The notion of God as held by any group of people is one of the most vital keys they can offer the missionary as an insight into the depths of their human feelings about a score of subjects other than the purely religious. In fact, the missionary who will know his people will have to first know their God. How a people symbolize the supernatural and the way they think and feel toward their God or gods is not only a clue to the stuff of which the society is made but an indication of what in Christianity will be immediately relevant and what will undergo radical reinterpretation to fit the existing scheme of things, and what will have to be rejected as unintelligible. Even in spite of this process it is possible to embody paradoxes and contradictions and to make little or no attempt to have things logically consistent. What a society or any individual will think about man is not determined so much by his method of studying man (historian, anthropologist, biologist) but by what he assumes man to be. Likewise what a society thinks about man's relation to God and vice versa is not set by the manner of approaching God but by what it assumes man and God to be.

The two societies dealt with here assume similar yet quite different things about God and these in turn are reflected in basically different human orientations which give life's purpose (or lack of it) different ends. Knowledge of a man's view of God is not immediately given by simply asking for it but is gotten at rather through his practices, attitudes, values, institutions, systems of beliefs and relations to other human beings.

It is no exaggeration to say that man creates God in his own image. This creation of God in the image of the people likewise affects and determines much of the way in which man creates his culture. The two things are interdependent. (Christianity's claim to withstand this charge is contained in the view of God which originates from a self-disclosing God who reveals himself to man.)

In order to catch a comparative view of God we will give first Christian conceptions of God with their counterparts seen from Kaka and Quechua concepts. This may be done best by separating the Christian set into 1) God as God, and 2) God as Redeemer. The confusion of these two aspects of God in the minds of the Kaka and Quechua create an incredible disturbance for comprehending Christianity.

God as God.

Christian: God is perfect.

Kaka: God is a spider, Ndjambie. His character is impersonal, thus perfection or lack of it cannot be one of his attributes.

Quechua: God is Father, Taita Dios, who is as personal as Taita may decide to be. He is not granted a state of perfection. He is only reckoned as good or bad according to his acts.

Christian: God is one and infinite.

Kaka and Quechua: Ndjambie and Taita Dios are not infinite but submerged in an infinite cosmos. Therefore

they are not the creator even though called that. Not being truly creator, Ndjambie and Taita Dios are not infinite.

Christian: God is law giver and judge.

Kaka: Ndjambie is not connected with enforcing supernatural sanctions (e.g. punishment for incest). The "law" is given through the ancestors whose spirits enforce its sanctions.

Quechua: Taita Dios is judge without being law giver; therefore, his judgment is capricious.

Christian: Since God is perfect and the law giver, humans are dependent morally.

Kaka: No such dependence follows.

Quechua: Dependence is entirely on a material level since Taita Dios is unrelated to perfection.

Christian: God is the creator and author of cosmological order.

Kaka and Quechua: Such order as exists is unquestioned and indifferently ascribed to Ndjambie and Taita Dios.

Christian: Individual feeling of responsibility on part of man to God; man therefore acknowledges himself as sinful.

Kaka and Quechua: Ndjambie and Taita Dios are responsible to man, no feeling for the converse. Therefore, man is not a sinner before Ndjambie and Taita Dios, nor responsible to them.

Christian: Anthropomorphizes in God the essence of the highest moral and spiritual values.

Kaka: The highest moral and spiritual values are held to be in the spirits of the dead who attained to socially approved status in this life.

Quechua: The highest moral value is one which is sanctioned by the group and he seeks in no way to universalize it.

Christian: God is personal, the Father of man.

Kaka: Ndjambie is totally impersonal, a spider.

Quechua: Taita Dios, "Father God," may be cajoled into being personal, but his impersonality shares in the impersonality of volcano peaks which are co-divinities with Taita Dios. These are also called Taita. The fatherhood of volcanoes comes about through the marriage union of these mountains which gave origin to man (Quechua man).

Christian: God is eternal and man's relation to God is an eternal one.

Kaka: Ndjambie is eternal but remains so independent of man.

Quechua: Life and Taita Dios are viewed as static without reference to eternity.

Christian: God is omniscient but loving and caring for man.

Kaka: Ndjambie neither knows nor cares about humans. His job is to help keep the cosmos regulated.

Quechua: Taita Dios knows only what the saints or the Virgin may care to pass on to him. These may be cajoled through fiesta rites.

Christian: God is unchangeable.

Kaka and Quechua: Ndjambie and Taita Dios are egocentric and can and do look after their own interests first. They are not attributed any persistent unchanging personality qualities. While Taita Dios is quite durable and static he is characterized by whimsical moods.

Christian: God is the embodiment of all truth.

Kaka and Quechua: The existence of universal truth is not posited.

Christian: God is just, holy and good independently of man.

Kaka: None of these qualities are attributed to Ndjambie.

Quechua: Taita Dios is good if he accords the request of his petitioners. Otherwise he is bad or angry, getting revenge on man.

God as Redeemer.

This second view of God, the Christian revelation, does not come ordinarily to such people as the Kaka and Quechua after they have cleared the ground for a redemptive God, but at the very outset. The confusions which result are directly or indirectly responsible for the general syncretistic conceptualizations of God which one finds on the mission fields.

Christian: Man stands guilty before God as a sinful creature.

Kaka and Quechua: Man is simply an unfortunate die tossed by fate.

Christian: God is moved through loving compassion to deliver man from his sinful state.

Kaka: Ndjambie has no care and man is not sinful. Men simply do bad deeds.

Quechua: Taita Dios can be placated for his wrath and provoked to help man in his unfortunate conditions. Man is not a sinner but does wrongs such as stealing.

Christian: God initiates a plan to bring man unto himself motivated through love. Such a plan becomes a part of human history. God the law giver and judge receives in himself his own penalty because of his love for man.

Kaka: Ndjambie has had no plan because he has had no concern for man as man. History to which Christianity refers its revelation does not exist. The personalized dealing of the Christian God can in no way fit impersonal Ndjambie.

Quechua: Taita Dios in the Roman Catholic notion is admitted to have made a plan of salvation. However, the purpose for this plan remains an anomaly for the Quechua since after 400 years of indoctrination he still does

not make the assumptions about man's conditions which would prompt Taita Dios to reveal himself.

Christian: God is the self-disclosing God of revelation unfolding in history and witnessed to in Scripture.

Kaka and Quechua: The nonpresent world is not historical but mythological. The witness of a written record for Ndjambie would presuppose that the Bible Ndjambie begins with the contact with the literate white population. For the Quechua the written record of Taita Dios is denied by the local parish priest which strengthens and confirms the Quechua hold on a syncretized Taita and Dios.

Religious views revealed in culture.

If we keep these religious assumptions in mind and trace through some of the aspects of these cultures we will see readily how these unvoiced statements of faith provide a key note for behavior. Some examples follow.

1. "God" is not infinite to the Kaka and Quechua and is not in control of the universe. He is enmeshed in the cosmos in such a way that he is totally lacking in concern for man as such. This lack of concern for man flows on through to man's lack of concern for man.

2. Ndjambie and Taita Dios are totally removed from ethical considerations bbecause they have no attributes of perfection. Among the Kaka the idea of God the Judge is also lacking. Consequently behavior is curbed by the fear of being caught by another man. What is expedient is right. Ends justify means.

3. Men do not assume that they are guilty sinners before Ndjambie and Taita Dios. Hence they are not responsible before these gods. This freedom from responsibility before Ndjambie and Taita Dios allows a freedom from responsibility on the human level also. The Kaka and Quechua do not make assumptions about their

gods which would allow them to be morally dependent upon these gods. It is much safer to be independent of these capricious divinities than to trust one's lot to their whims.

4. The core of ethical behavior for the Quechua and Kaka does not arise from feelings about the perfection and moral attributes of Ndjambie and Taita Dios. Ethical considerations are based upon the idealized behavior of the ingroup. However, the ethical relations of one's kin or social group are of such deep value that they are held to be sacred. Among the Kaka the violation of such proper behavior can result in supernatural punishment. Since these punishments are not forthcoming for "unethical" behavior outside of one's own group there is a double standard of ethics fully consistent with the dichotomy of the sacred society and the indifferent and impersonal Ndjambie. Man does not compare his ethical or moral self with a holy, righteous Ndjambie but with the accepted standards of behavior for his ingroup, a heritage from the ancestors.

5. Ndjambie and Taita Dios are unrelated to "truth." Therefore, there is no search for truth with respect for the truth. One is more interested in establishing a point of view favorable to the support of the ego.

6. A major orientation in both societies is that of being controlled by fate. Ndjambie and Taita Dios are not the creative Will, they are not infinite. They do not have personal concern and love for man in his plight. They are whimsical, changeable, impersonal and show no concern nor love for man. A major difference between the Kaka and the Quechua is that the latter assume one can solicit through Catholic fiestas the aid of Taita Dios through his mother (the Virgin). The Kaka, because Ndjambie is too far removed to be concerned, rely upon magic, mainly in the form of medicines. If the medicines fail, the Kaka appeals through the sorcerer to spirits in nature or the spirits of the dead. The

Quechua may pray for help from the spirits of the volcanoes. In both cases, if failure results one has completed the circle of fate and is ready to start again. The Quechua's subservience makes him a ready pawn of fate but basically the two meet at the same point.

Translator's dilemma

When the translator writes Ndjambie or Taita Dios in the context of the Christian Scriptures, is he really translating? There is no better native term in these two cultures and a foreign word would be lacking entirely in the few equivalences which do exist. On the other hand, Ndjambie and Taita Dios, in spite of the fact that converts use them, are not on their face value equivalent to the Christian God. However, it is precisely the convert who is attempting to fit to his god concepts for which he has derived little or no feeling from his culture. The Biblical Ndjambie who cared for man, worked out a plan, carried it out at a certain point in history and plans ahead for the future is hardly recognizable to the average Kaka tribesman. His Ndjambie shares with the tribe the lack of concern for men outside of the clan. The thinking forward to carry out a plan and then actually doing it is contrary to the ideal of Kaka effort which makes no plan ahead of today because no one knows what might happen tomorrow. Because of this he does not recognize his relation to any such farsighted Biblical Ndjambie.

The comparative assumptions about God as God are quite different between a Christian concept and the Kaka and Quechua notions. There are some similarities, however. When we move to a comparison of notions of God as Redeemer, the disparities between the Christian on one hand and the Kaka and Quechua on the other become immense.

Conclusion

Christian missions compound confusions with their ubiquitous catechisms which begin by parading past a

multitude of unknown Bible characters from Genesis through Revelation in order to show the learner who God is. These names, usually adaptations from a colonial language, fully convince the would-be convert that the white man's God is not only a trinity but a pantheon of immense proportions. These catechisms assume the convert's religious mind is an empty basin to be filled for the first time in his life. This procedure not only defeats the purpose of catechising but leaves the learner with a fragmented confusion of his own god and little or no idea of the Christian God. The result of this can hardly be called Christianizing. It could be more properly called "detheizing." Such a process leads naturally among many complacent nonliterate people to a general apathetic "Christian" life. Essentially this is what has happened to millions of the inhabitants of Andean South America and is one of the great moral blights in history.

A conceptual transformation of God as God is necessary before man can understand and grasp the idea of God as Redeemer. People are known to have thrown over their gods. The Hawaiians are an example. People everywhere in history have been putting away old gods for new. However, such a total renunciation comes from a motivation to do so completely. It does not follow that such a transition means an automatic preparation to accept a radically different notion of God. The task for Christian missions is to so deal with man's religious ideas that the Christian notion of God prepares a man to accept the Redeemer notion of God. Merely renouncing a pagan god or belief system does not in any way in itself mean that the renouncing individual is thereby prepared to grasp in faith the idea and spiritual reality of the Christian God of loving redemption.

—W.D.R.

Questions for readers.

1. Is there such a thing as making the Christian message relevant? If so, relevant to what?

2. In the framework of our discussion here where does the conversion of Saint Paul fit?

3. Does this presentation assist one to see that anthropological data are a vital aspect of the proclamation of the Gospel?

4. Can you supply information from your area of work which strengthens or weakens the position taken here?

Please communicate your interests to the Editor of P.A. or to W. D. Reyburn, B. P. 8, Batouri, Cameroun Français.

PRACTICAL PROBLEMS

[In the fall of 1956, a surprise attack by the people of the area took place on a Christian and Missionary Alliance mission station in the Wisselmeren area of interior New Guinea. We asked the Gordon Larsons for information which we could pass along to our readers. Mrs. Larson's account follows.]

"The Reason Has Not Been Determined"

"He sends the sunshine and the rain." Would the airplane come or not? was what we pondered as the cloudy and rainy day for the dedication of the new mission plane came. But when we learned it was landing in Obano, we set out for there in two motor boats, still hoping for a picnic lunch on the way back. As I look back, two things stand out in my memory. One was the lack of natives at the dedication service, and the other a huge smoke going up on the mountainside to our left as we stood waiting for the rain to slacken. We listened to the singing of the extension school children and the message from our area secretary, Rev. Chrisman, who was visiting our field at this time. God was more interested in the dedication of our lives than our possessions (although He wanted both), was the theme of the message, and we prayed together committing the plane into His care and keeping. The rain continued gently, but by the time we were eating our picnic lunch indoors, it was coming down full force. As we splashed through the mud and the rain back to the boats and across the lake, little did we realize the rain was a blessing in disguise.

As we walked back up the hill to our homes, we talked of the rumors that were going around from the pig feast that had been held only the Wednesday before. Was it true that the natives had said they were going to kill off the foreigners or outside people? Yes, it was true that at the pig feast only the far-away pigs were

killed and sold, and the nearby ones saved for the following day when there would be no "visitors" looking on and listening to their plans. Yes, even the schoolboys had been talking far into the night, Miss Elza Stringer, our teacher from Holland, said, but they did not know of the intended time or place. I don't think anyone at the time thought it too serious. (It was only in God's providence that Elza had decided on the spur of the moment to come over from Obano with us for the weekend.) If we had only known the natives were gathered up on the mountainsides around Obano planning an attack that did not materialize that day because of rain, we would have praised God for His protection.

It was the following day, November 4, after the church service that had been attended mostly by women and children, that they struck. Slipping up through the tall grass round about with their bows and arrows and, after first getting the two guns of the policemen that had gone over with us to protect the plane, they killed the Biak policeman, our Indonesian teacher and his wife, the Lesnusas, and two Indonesian children of two other couples who were staying with them attending school. The fingers of Mr. Lesnusa were cut off and sent to other villages. If any village accepted the fingers, it meant that they, too, joined forces to get rid of all outsiders. Schoolboys who tried to protect the Lesnusas were told to step aside or be shot themselves, so they fled. The houses and newly built schoolbuildings and storage building were raided and burned. The airplane was completely ruined as they hacked away on it with hatchets, not only that day but also days later. They used axes that had been in the plane for the drop.

A native pastor a couple of hours' walk from here first saw the burning buildings and ran here to tell us. By that time we could see the smoke rising up over the mountain that hides Obano from our view here. Quickly the men obtained a fast motor boat from the government and started across the lake. On a small island in the lake, they stopped and climbed to the top. By looking

through binoculars, they could see the buildings burned to the ground. They returned and, although Mr. Troutman and Mr. Ulrich, our pilot, attempted once more to reach the plane, it was thought best to stop for the night.

Later during the week, the bodies were brought over for burial. Mr. Lesnusa's body had been mutilated--arms off to the elbow and nose missing. It is believed they may have eaten it.

Areas to the east of us and across the lake accepted the fingers and, although attacks were made on Enarotali here, by that time outside help (Marines) had arrived.

As the news went over the two-way radio to our other stations here in New Guinea, invariably the question came, "Do you know the reason for the uprising?" From different sources came various answers, such as sickness of their pigs, the old ones losing their grip on the younger generation, changes in government leadership, rebellion against civilization being forced upon them, "cargo cult" (that is, they were asked what they would do when their gardens were gone, and they answered that the airplane would bring in their supplies). Also, one chief had two dreams, one being that the lake came up to the top of the highest mountain here, and the fulfillment of that dream was when he was put in jail here. The other dream was that he killed five policemen himself (in his dream), and now was the time to strike.

Although the above are possibilities, the real reason has not yet been determined by the Dutch government. Each area has surrendered, and we again have peace.

Margaret Larson

This Calls for Anthropological Study

Even in this brief report from Mrs. Larson, it is very clear that the missionaries in the Wisselmeren region of New Guinea are confronted with a nativistic re-

volt such as has often characterized the reaction of peoples when they see their culture disintegrating under the pressure of Western culture and even of missions. The events which have occurred are symptomatic of a serious cultural disease. The area may have been pacified, but the disease is still there.

The symptoms indicate that the Kapaukus feel rapid changes are taking place in their midst. They have lost their footing, their security. They tried to re-establish the pre-mission status quo, and they were suppressed. As Christians interested in society and in culture, deeply concerned about the Christian witness, how shall we view these events?

We can decide that the missionaries are God's responsibility, pray for them, and wash our hands of the affair.

We can blame the whole affair on the devil and consider that the devil was at least temporarily defeated by the law-enforcement agencies.

We can point out that there are always some people who reject the Gospel and consider that by so saying we have solved the problem.

Each of these reactions we might have is a truism, but if we stop with any of them we have been guilty of rationalization, for we have ignored the lessons of cultural history. This is not to say that God and Satan have not been at work in cultural history, but the cultural forces are there for us to study and to understand, and our present tragedy is such a clear instance of a type of event which has been studied often and deeply in other places and whose implications are beginning to be known.

The safety of the mission staff is involved. But more than that, the whole future of the church in the area is involved. It is not that this hard-won little

church is likely to be snuffed out by such a period of troubles, but it is the vitally important fact that the church is related to a culture which is in the spasms of a pathological culture change, and the church must speak to that culture in its time of need if it is ever to be rooted soundly in the Wisselmeren.

The situation in the Wisselmeren area warrants a serious anthropological investigation by a Christian anthropologist able to assess the present cultural turmoil and able to help others learn to tell the Good News in a manner relevant to the Kapauku's needs as the Kapauku sees them, and relevant to the emerging future. There is far too much at stake to "muddle through" here.

W.A.S.

EDITORIAL REMARKS

Christian Education and Christian Preaching

The visitor to certain parts of Africa cannot help but be struck by the stupendous missionary educational program. I saw it particularly in the Belgian Congo. Along the sandy roads which go everywhere, village after village had its little thatched school building (often with only half-walls to let in light). Here one or more African schoolteachers would be expounding the three R's, plus calisthenics in the European style, singing, and other oddments.

The higher grades were taught at the mission station some distance away. Splendid brick or stone buildings were lined up in dignified order next to the hospital and the missionary residences. There were students' resident quarters with the girls' huts segregated inside a formidable wire fence. Again, the teachers were usually African, with a missionary in supervision. Perhaps another dedicated, hard-working missionary (or more than one) spent his time traveling from one village school to another, supervising, settling difficulties, paying salaries, counselling, testing. The effort, the dedication, the investment, the organization, were stupendous.

Once (not in Congo) I stood at the back of one of the typical village schools and watched some primary students perform. Schools in this area were conducted in French, due to government policy, but I suspect the material would have been much the same if the African language had been used. "This is a cat," intoned a bright little reader. "The cat is an animal. This is a horse. The horse is also an animal. This is a pen. The pen is not an animal."

The lesson was apparently taken wholesale from a reading book for French children, or at least adapted from one. I turned and looked at the village behind me. Cats? Horses? Maybe there were some somewhere, but I

didn't see them. Goats were everywhere in evidence. Pens? I wondered if there were any in the village outside of the little school. Not that the youngsters or their parents were concerned about this discrepancy, for it never would have occurred to these villagers or to many of their teachers that formal education could be anything useful, practicable, or adaptable to an African village.

Education, like Christianity, so often is not a bridge to a better African life, but a symbol of identification with the dazzling power and prestige of the West. As Dr. Reyburn pointed out to me in his area, the great theme of motivation by which the African child is spurred on to education is that of becoming "somebody" in a rapidly acculturating world.

But it wasn't this function of education which bothered me, for I have no particular objections to cultures changing if people want to change! What did concern me was the relation of the preaching of the Gospel to all of this. It is true that the youngsters were under the influence of Christian teachers, of Christian missionaries, and had instruction in Christian religion. But how would they learn through all of this that the Son of God lived the forms of a Jewish culture to teach Africans that they must live out their faith in God, their life of reconciliation, in African forms of life? Could they learn it here in this thatched mixture of France and Africa, with all of the focus on France? Could they learn it from African teachers who, though Christians, didn't know it, whose overwhelming motivation was to adopt more perfectly the symbols of identification with the glamour of the outside world?

But, for that matter, was this school any different from most missionary endeavor--even evangelism? How could these youngsters ever learn that the Holy Spirit works differently through African culture to transform men by faith than He does in the West, if the missionary doesn't know it either?

I do not think missionary education, or missionary preaching, should be abolished because it has so badly distorted its message in the past, and continues to do so. But I do feel that preaching, and teaching, will themselves have to be transformed if they are to convey more relevantly the message of the true Transformation which comes in men's lives only in the context of the life they know. Only when teaching becomes relevant both to Faith and to life (African or Indian or Asian life) will education be Christian education, and (dare we say it?) will preaching be Christian preaching in such areas of extreme conflict of cultural values. There have been sensitive souls whose ministry has been so transformed. Relatively speaking, they seem to be few.

Fortunately the Holy Spirit works anyhow, and strangely enough, He works through us (the missionaries) even though we are often preoccupied with tasks that will make it as hard as possible for Him. We have very often substituted the filthy rags of culture--our culture--for the Bread of Life, but the Holy Spirit has built a church in many places, though it often is festooned in a bizarre way with these unlovely tatters.

--W.A.S.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

If Only--

Recently, through the courtesy of Dr. Wm. Reyburn, I made my initial contact with your very interesting little journal. I have read right through his entire file. I am so very much pleased with your work and for this reason:--

In 1910 I came to this Mission (the West Africa Mission of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.) as an industrial missionary. I was fairly well equipped as far as the practice of the necessary trades was concerned and had normal school after high school. Each furlough I went right back to school and in 1930 was given a B.A. in education from the Fresno (Calif.) State Teachers College. I majored in manual arts. During the next six years I taught woodwork in the Sheldon Jackson School in Sitka, Alaska. Sickness in the family made it necessary to resign and return to the States. We chose Wheaton

for our residence so that our son could have the advantage of Wheaton College and Academy. His mother and I both entered college classes. I had two courses with Dr. Grigolia in anthropology. That work was an eye opener, and very early in the course I began to lament, "If only I had had this before I went to Africa, what a difference it would have made." With regret I look back upon the embarrassments and the lost opportunities, and would like to save others from like mistakes.

The lifetime experiences of missionaries, traders, and government officials are source material for the doctrines of anthropology. Therefore the science should be used by new missionaries, not as a governor, but to illuminate the unfamiliar culture and guide the conduct.

So, from that day to this, I have used every opportunity to urge anthropology as a necessity for every missionary candidate.

Herbert W. Greig
Batouri, Cameroun

"We Are Pleased"

I have just been reading the March-April issue of PA which arrived not too long ago. It's wonderful from cover to cover. That's sure good news about the big jump in subscribers. "The Meo--An Incipient Church" deserves superlatives, but I suspect that G. Linwood Barney is a pen-name. Is it? [No. --Ed.]

"Taste in Christian Music" by Douglas Feaver was a very clear, well thought-out treatment of the subject. There's anthropology of a kind for PA's pastor-readers. But, with the exception of the introduction on the equal validity of different styles and tastes in music, the article seemed to necessitate too much thinking to apply it to the mission field situation for a lot of missionaries to get its implications. It seems to need a com-

plementary article applying the principles embodied in much of this article to the problem of the style of Christian music on the mission field. I'd sure like to see a competent article on this subject.

We're very pleased with PA. Keep up the good work.

Gordon P. Loptson
Casilla 137
Quito, Ecuador

The article in PA, March-April issue, regarding the Meo was excellent. The cultural context was just sufficient for a proper understanding of both the content of Christianity which has been accepted as against the superfluous details of Western culture which were not found necessary, and the problems which face the new Christians. The realization of these problems, as the church continues, allows for intelligent prayer on our part and a better understanding of the cultural and super-cultural factors involved.

My thanks to Mr. Barney for his well-written account.

Richard Turner
201 No. Washington St.
Wheaton, Illinois

Some Suggestions

The Reyburn reports have been tops - just great, and if your new department, "Practical Problems," is as good in the future as the first installment was, you have nothing to fear! Plenty-a-meat there; fine work! I've contacted four people who definitely said they wanted to subscribe. I gave them full information. I hope they pushed through with it. Your views of expansion seem to show good insight into the needs of a magazine of PA's stature. I know of nothing like it in any missionary

program or Christian publication. It seems as though many missionary magazines are afraid to deal with the deep culture problems. Well, maybe from a "stronger" PA people will wake up. The name of the magazine could be more specific as to what your emphasis is, like "Practical Cultural Anthropology." Maybe the subtitle could be "for Christians." But actually I still think what you have is all right.

Purpose? Maybe it should include a statement that PA intends to consider all facets of culture-contact and diffusion (relating to Christian endeavor). It is for the express purpose of breaking down ethnocentrism; to keep the reader up on some of the current happenings in anthropology studies of other universities and groups.

Keep up the good work!

James Muir
Wheaton College
Wheaton, Illinois